

# Scottish Farm Business Survey

Case Study



The Scottish Farm Business Survey has been running since the 1930s and is a detailed economic study of over 400 farm businesses in Scotland, commissioned by Scottish Government.

Andrew  
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RESAS

Rural & Environmental Science  
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Andrew McFadzean works on a small family-run dairy farm in Ayrshire, Towerhill Farm, which his father and grandfather began operating in the 1970s. Initially on leaving school, Andrew began to follow a different career path, studying chemistry and drug research at university. However, when Covid-19 struck in March 2020, he decided to return home and start working on the family farm, realising the value of the business that his father and grandfather had worked so hard to build.

In 2011 Andrew's father began working with SAC Consulting who, with the support of Government funding, introduced robotics onto the farm; one of the many reasons Andrew says propelled him to come back home to his farming roots.

Towerhill Farm has been participating in the Scottish Farm Business Survey for around 3 years now. Although both generations were hesitant to join at first, after a farm visit from one of SAC's business analysts, they quickly realised the impacts taking part in the survey would have not only on their decision making on farm, but to influence government decision making as well.

*"When we spoke to our first analyst from SAC, she explained what the survey was, who the data would be going to and what we would receive in return. For us, we were walking into the unknown. So, it was great to understand what the value was for both us and the Government. It was a very easy process; we were made to feel comfortable with how our data would be handled."*

The Scottish Farm Business Survey is not only designed to help farmers to understand their own business financial performance, but the data collected is also a key statistical source that will help inform the Scottish Government's future policies.



*"I think for a lot of younger people like me, understanding how this can influence the Government is more important than what we can do with the information on the farm. My dad wanted to ensure that the data we shared would be anonymised and secure. The trust element is important for him, so I'm glad we were able to speak to someone and be reassured on that before we took part."*

Andrew explained that the survey takes a snapshot of not only the challenges on farm, but also the successes.

*"We consistently get to see the strengths that we have as a small business, and we find that more important than thinking about the problems that we have. For me, it's crucial that the Government sees this so they can support both sides."*

*"Being open and transparent with data to ensure Government policy makers and advisors have a good data set to work from is important. I think we should collectively be sharing this information as farmers in Scotland."*

As a result of taking part in the survey, farms receive a farm business report, performance benchmarking report and a whole farm carbon audit every year.

Andrew's background in data and analytics meant that he found the whole farm benchmark tool and the annual farm business reports invaluable to support the ongoing management of his family's farm.

*"Having different viewpoints to support business decisions was important for us. Each year when we get our own reports, it's good to look at things from the management sense and consider what is going well and what isn't."*

*We can look at the benchmarking report and see how we are performing against other farms and find out what our strengths are. A lot of the benchmarking tools feed into the wider picture and help us to consolidate our thoughts – it gives us a chance to refocus."*

*The carbon report is a reliable yearly report and it's great as we don't have to do the hard work ourselves which has put us off doing them in the past. When we previously looked into it, the volume of information we had to find ourselves was overwhelming. We definitely take a lot of value from the survey, that's why we continue to do it."*



If you're interested in learning more about the Scottish Farm Business Survey and how it can help your business, visit [www.sruc.ac.uk/business-services/sac-consulting/farm-business-management/scottish-farm-business-survey](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/business-services/sac-consulting/farm-business-management/scottish-farm-business-survey)